

## Chapter 4.8:

## Short-Term Uses of Environment Compared with Long-Term Benefits

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The Portageville Bridge Project under the Preferred Alternative would result in a substantial benefit when short-term uses of the environment are compared to the long-term benefits.

The Project's "short-term" uses would include the temporary impacts during construction, including temporary disruptions to the main park road and three park trails in Letchworth State Park, temporary visual impacts, noise and potential dust-related effects, and the need for stormwater controls during construction. In addition, as noted in the previous chapters of the DEIS, the Project would result in adverse impacts to a historic resource (Letchworth State Park, listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places) because of the demolition of the bridge and other changes near the bridge, an impact to a small wetland, natural resources impacts related to the loss of small forested areas and the loss of cliff face habitat suitable for coast creeping moss, and a moderate noise impact to locations adjacent to the rail right-of-way because of the increased train speed facilitated by the new bridge. In combination with the increased train traffic expected on the Southern Tier route because of other projects, the increased train speed could result in a severe impact at nearby residences.

However, the Project would result in long-term benefits, including increased economic productivity for the region and the reduced consumption of fossil fuels and associated air quality benefits associated with more efficient rail cargo transport rather than the use of trucks. The *New York State Rail Plan* (New York State Department of Transportation, 2009) identifies the Portageville Bridge as one of 10 bottlenecks in New York State's Class I rail network. The plan finds that the Portageville Bridge limits the load carrying capacity and operating speed of the Southern Tier route. The report concludes that, "the weight restrictions and low operating speeds significantly impact the line's overall capacity. Any long-term closing of the Portageville Bridge would threaten the vitality of the entire route between Buffalo and Binghamton." The rail plan identifies that New York State's Class I freight rail network is critical to New York State's long-term economic vitality.

Thus, although the proposed Project would result in short-term impacts during construction and certain other environmental impacts, these would be offset by the long-term gains of more efficient freight rail operations on the Southern Tier route and the environmental benefits associated with moving freight by rail.